

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 28TH JULY, 1905.

T. H. GILL, President of the New Zealand Educational Institute, examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Will you make a statement, Mr. Gill?—Yes, sir. As president of the New Zealand Educational Institute I desire to place my views and the views of the executive of the institute before the Education Committee of the House. The Bill makes ample provision for a retiring-allowance to all original members under thirty years of age, and also to all new entrants, in providing a retiring-allowance of “one-sixtieth part of the total salary paid during all the years of his contribution to the fund” to all male contributors who have reached the optional retiring-age of sixty years or the compulsory retiring-age of sixty-five years. This means that after forty years of contribution to the fund the contributor will draw a retiring-allowance of two thirds of his salary during the whole period of service. As the average salary for male teachers in the colony is slightly in excess of £180 per annum, the average retiring-allowance will amount to £120. The fixing of a minimum of £52 as a retiring-allowance provides for a larger number of teachers who are in very small schools and who, in consequence, are in receipt of very small salaries—salaries so small that the contributors would not be able to make anything like an adequate provision for old age—possibly no provision at all. This also applies to a very large number of women teachers on the staffs of the large schools, and whose average salary would not be large. There are many women teachers, too, filling the positions of mistress in a very large number of schools taught by a master and a mistress. The executive of the institute, while recognising that the fixing of a minimum enabled the very poorly paid teachers to retire on an allowance of £52 per annum, and so treated in a liberal manner a number of deserving men and women, felt that the minimum, which would also be the maximum for nearly all teachers over fifty years of age, was not a sufficient recognition to a number of better-paid teachers whose pecuniary obligations in cities and towns did not permit them to make provision for old age. Many of these teachers have passed their years of usefulness, have done good service to education, and ought to be retired in the interest of the children; but the figures given by the Prime Minister to the deputation yesterday showed that very great financial obligations would have to be undertaken by the colony if a higher retiring-allowance were given to these teachers. Whilst I regret this, I am so strongly of opinion that the Bill is on the whole advantageous to the teachers of the colony that I hope it will be passed. It confers so many benefits on the young teachers—and these in the main are the ones to be considered—that I personally should deplore any action which would prevent this Bill passing. If the tying-up of the fund for a period of, say, three years would enable old teachers to secure a larger retiring-allowance—fixing the maximum so that large allowances were impossible—I should be glad. Or if any other means could be devised to provide more liberally for these old teachers without imperiling the Bill I would welcome it. I regard a scheme of superannuation as even more important than an increase of salaries—and that is certainly needed—because only an exceedingly small number will ever be able to save sufficient money to provide for the evening of life. Opportunities of making large incomes are afforded to many professional men and business men too, but are denied to teachers; and the occupation and mode of life of the teaching profession, while making demands on a small or moderate income, prevent them from acquiring that keenness so essential to accumulating money. The reduction of the retiring-age from fifty-five to fifty in the case of women was asked in the interests of a number of poorly paid, hard-worked women teachers; but as I have no doubt that some of the women themselves will give evidence before this Committee, and could no doubt represent their case very much better than I could, I shall content myself with saying that if this request could be given effect to I should heartily concur, because I believe that thirty years of trying work make large demands on a woman's nervous system.

2. *Mr. J. Allen.*] You referred to the minimum of £52, and said that there were a large number of teachers with small salaries. Have you any statistics as to these salaries, or can you give us any average of what is being paid now?—No, I cannot; but the returns would show it.

3. (To Mr. Hogben.) Can we get that information later on, Mr. Hogben?—Yes.

4. (To witness.) And the women too, Mr. Gill: can you give us any particulars of the women's salaries that you were referring to?—No. All I know is that a very large number of salaries, even in the city schools, are under £100 a year, or thereabouts. I mean in the town schools, and the schools having only a mistress.

5. (To Mr. Hogben.) The witness referred to the minimum of £52, Mr. Hogben, and said that there were a large number of teachers with small salaries. What I wanted to get at was the average, in order to see how it compared with the minimum.—If the Committee desire it I can give the number of salaries between certain limits.